

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz

November 24, [1834]

It is quite a privilege My dear Maria, to be again able to sit down quietly to my desk _ and yet I did not mean to write to you, until I had so far honoured [your?] last charming letter, as to have called to see your young friend Miss Wickliffe _ but we have been interdicted all intercourse with our friends & neighbours on account of [Variodloid]. Sally Minis took the [disease] more than a month ago and had it very badly. it was almost old fashioned Small pox _ she lodged in the same room with Miriam & Becky & we there nursed her, keeping the rest of the family as much out of the way as possible, but Ned & Sarah took it _ they were not very sick, and have no marks _ I was sick too for a week, but not with that disease, however, it completely separated us from Mme. Segoignes family, and even from our own Kinsfolk _ but the embargo is removed, Sarah went out yesterday, (who was the last to suffer,) and I hope to be admitted to see Miss W. without alarming her careful guardian _ tho we were disappointed that Elizabeth Blair was not permitted to come up yesterday, having kept her away two weeks while there was any risk of her taking it _ Miss [Adelle?] with all her sense & accomplishments is nervous to a great degree and is afraid of all evils in the shape of disease she was ill for fear of cholera, and travelled about tormenting herself, when in fact there was little risk in staying at home, and much more comfort in being there where duty might have required her _
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but when intercourse is again established. Miss Wickliffe shall be invited to be a weekly guest in Boston row. and you may assure her friends, that your wishes shall in all respects be accomplished as far as lies in my power, it delights me dearest Sister, to be thought well of by your friends because I owe their opinions to your love, and if [there] be any safe indulgence of vanity it is the consequence we feel. arising [from] the love we inspire _ I think it may appear out of character in one of my age to plead excuses for vanity _ Women are not expected to want them at any period of life _ and to tell the truth I have revelled so long in the affections of kind friends. that it requires strict self examination to fix a standard of truth. by which to shape

my humility. and My Sister, your praise I find oftenest a test _ because [in] all other subjects your opinions are accepted _ and therefore I have to put your partiality in the other scale to get the true [balance] _ I say your opinions on all other subjects Maria, although you so frequently speak of one in which there are shades of difference between us _ but these perhaps are the fruits of education, had I not been born a Jewess. I should be what you are _ a seeker after the faith which could bring me nearest to the pure worship of the Most High God, creator of heaven & earth! and dearest Sister, in the precious book from which we both draw our light. we both find warrant to love as brothers & Sisters all the human family who with sincerity of heart worship God _ and had you been a daughter of Israel, I am fair to believe _ tho' you might change one fundamental law. "for what does God require of us more than to do justly. love mercy and [end of page]

keep his commandments" _ our little reader Mr. Leiser, has published a book which I mean to send you, called "the Jews & the Mosaic Law _" I do not know that you will like it _ because there are a great many faults in it. as to style manner &c &c _ but there is a great deal of zeal & knowledge & patriotism for the [despised?] nation _ and a great deal of sincere piety & love of his religion. as you know the man, and his [disadvantages] you will read it with indulgence _ We have had a short visit from our old friend Mr. Levy too _ (but I was too sick to profit by it _) who I consider the most enlightened Jew I have ever conversed with _ he is a great enthusiast, and if he lived in an age of enthusiasm might be adopted as his name-sake Elias _ the forerunner of the Messiah _ so earnest, so deeply impressed with [the] sorrow for the degradation of his people _ and so desirous of rousing them from [the?] shame of [ignorant] & debasing indifference to their religion _ he has been wandering about the world, wherever he could find any of his brethren willing [to] listen to him. he is a noble looking man _ with such a countenance as you might imagine belonged to Jeremiah when he lamented the down fall of his people _ or of [Isaiah] when he raised his voice inspired, to rouse them to return & be saved _ what a world is this! dear Sister, how various are the means taken to come at the same end. but surely God, looks down benignantly upon all _ & what ever fashion the dwellers on the earth may, use to honour Him [may] [He] will but look at the heart. and if its worship be pure intent. [He] will accept, it in

mercy & in truth.

I did not get out until yesterday, for 12 days and was sorry to find poor Fanny still suffering with her eye & looking very badly. Isabella nothing better _ Gratz is well and came to see me _ all the rest enjoy health _ I can hardly believe all you tell me about my beautiful Cary. he is still to me, the lovely babe, whose eyes were eloquent. but his tongue mute
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three years I can hardly realize it, have passed since I have seen the dear creatures _ my heart yearns to embrace you all again my beloved Brother too, tears will flow but cannot express what passes in my heart when I think of him _ and all his goodness _ I could almost quarrel with you Maria, for bringing your sheet of "Excerpts" _ you must gather the ashes & inspire the [Phoenix], and yet I shall lament the transformation _ all you have ever sent me appears so to fall in with my taste & feelings that I would not lose

the cogitations of one [of] your sociable sittings in exchange for even a brighter hour _ some time ago Mrs. J Biddle enquired if you ever mentioned her relations in your letters, they have been so long without information, as to be uncertain whither they escaped the cholera. can you give any intelligence about any of the Alexanders for her? _ Miss Peters is alive & lively as ever _ always your most enthusiastic friend & admirer, and will be so delighted when I tell her your remembrance, Miss Chapman was married last week, and I expect a full account of the whole festivity _ when I see her next _ Mrs. J. Biddle will of course inform her all about it _

Becky M, sends her love & says she is ashamed of not having written to you _ Sally says if Aunt M. would only send me a message _ I would write to her but I fear she forgets me _ but Dr. Hays is waiting for my letter & so [...?] dearest _ I have no room for another
love _ RG _

Novr. 24th.

[Address:]

To

Mrs. Benjamin Gratz
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[Editors' Note: The year of this letter is based on the publication date of Isaac Leeser's *The Jews and the Mosaic Law* in 1834.]